



DOCUMENTS ON THE 2008 U.S. ELECTIONS

A SELECTION OF THE INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER American Embassy Paris

AMERICANS FOLLOWING PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN MORE CLOSELY THAN IN 2004

National Annenberg Election Survey, March 24, 2008

<http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/Downloads/Releases/NAES%202008/CloselyFollowingFINALmar242008.pdf>

The 2008 presidential campaign has produced a surge in political interest among all demographic groups as reported by the National Annenberg Election Survey. Among the variables are age, income level, education level, and geographic location. Numbers are significantly higher than in the last presidential election.

BILINGUAL VOTING ASSISTANCE: SELECTED JURISDICTIONS' STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE

Government Accountability Office, January 18, 2008

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08182.pdf>

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, contains, among other things, provisions designed to protect the voting rights of U.S. citizens of certain ethnic groups whose command of the English language may be limited. The Department of Justice (DOJ) enforces these provisions, and the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) serves as a national clearinghouse for election information and procedures. The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 mandated that GAO study the implementation of bilingual voting under Section 203 of the act. This report discusses the ways that selected jurisdictions covered under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act have provided bilingual voting assistance as of the November 2006 general election and any subsequent elections through June 2007, and the challenges they reportedly faced in providing such assistance; and the perceived usefulness of this bilingual voting assistance, and the extent to which the selected jurisdictions evaluated the usefulness of such assistance to language minority voters. To obtain details about this voting assistance, GAO obtained information from election officials in 14 of the 296 jurisdictions required to provide it, as well as from community representatives in 11 of these jurisdictions. These jurisdictions were selected to reflect a range of characteristics such as geographic diversity and varying language minority groups.

BRINGING VOTING RIGHTS TO OVERSEAS AND MILITARY VOTERS

The Century Foundation, November 29, 2007

http://www.tcf.org/publications/electionreform/military_brief.pdf

Military and overseas voters--known as UOCAVA voters, after the federal law they are governed by, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act--always have had special challenges when it comes to voting. This new issue brief explains how difficult it is for military and overseas voters to vote, examines the problems encountered in making sure that these votes are counted, and suggests reforms for both easing the procedural problems and improving turnout among this often neglected group of voters.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 110th CONGRESS

The Congressional Research Service, September 28, 2007

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/93477.pdf>

This report provides an overview and analysis of 110th Congress legislation addressed in hearings or that has passed at least one chamber. The report also discusses two policy developments: Federal Election Commission (FEC) nominations and a recent Supreme Court ruling that could affect future political advertising (Federal Election Commission v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc.) Approximately 50 bills devoted largely to campaign finance have been introduced in the 110th Congress, but none have become law. The House has passed two bills containing campaign finance provisions. H.R. 2630 would restrict campaign and leadership political action committee (PAC) payments to candidate spouses. A provision in H.R. 3093 would prohibit spending Justice Department funds on criminal enforcement of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) "electioneering communication" provision. In the Senate, an electronic disclosure bill (S. 223) was reported from the Rules and Administration Committee but has not received floor consideration. The committee also held hearings on coordinated party expenditures (S. 1091) and congressional public financing (S. 1285) legislation. Most significantly, lobbying and ethics bill S. 1, which became law in September 2007 (P.L. 110-81), contains some campaign finance provisions.

THE EFFECTS OF VOTER IDENTIFICATION LAWS ON TURNOUT

The Caltech/MIT Voting technology Project, October 2007

http://vote.caltech.edu/media/documents/wps/vtp_wp57.pdf

There has been a great deal of research showing how election rules and procedures have systematically denied suffrage to women, racial and ethnic minorities, and other groups, especially in the United States. Another line of research on voter participation in the United States has looked at the modern period, and focused on possibly less pernicious, but still potentially problematic, procedures and laws that are argued to make voter registration and turnout more onerous: voter registration deadlines, inaccessible registration and voting processes, and the availability of polling places.

FEBRUARY FUNDRAISING FRENZY FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Campaign Finance Institute, March 21, 2008

<http://www.cfinst.org/pr/prRelease.aspx?ReleaseID=187>

This report provides an analysis of the candidates' monthly reports as filed with the Federal Election Commission on March 20, 2008. It notes that Barack Obama raised more money in February than any other candidate and that more than half of the money raised by the two major Democratic candidates came from "small donors" who gave \$200 or less. It also noted, however, that "small donors" tend to give multiple times so that the term "small donor" is somewhat misleading.

FEWER VOTERS IDENTIFY AS REPUBLICANS

The Pew Research Center, March 20, 2008

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/773/fewer-voters-identify-as-republicans>

The balance of party identification in the American electorate now favors the Democratic Party by a decidedly larger margin than in either of the two previous presidential election cycles. The share of voters who call themselves Republicans has declined by six points since 2004, and represents, on an annualized basis, the lowest percentage of self-identified Republican voters in 16 years of polling by the Center.

HAS AMERICA OUTGROWN THE CAUCUS? SOME THOUGHTS ON RESHAPING THE NOMINATION CONTEST

The Century Foundation, October 22, 2007

<http://www.tcf.org/publications/electionreform/caucusbrief.pdf>

Unlike primaries or the general election, in which citizens simply vote at their usual polling place, caucuses involve citizens within a precinct gathering at a school, restaurant, place of worship, or a private home. In Iowa, Republicans simply meet and vote for the candidates. The Democratic caucus-goers, however, engage in a process of publicly debating the candidates and gathering into groups in different parts of the room depending on which candidate they favor. Each candidate must have enough supporters to be "viable," a percentage that varies depending on the size of the caucus, but is normally 15 percent. If a candidate does not achieve viability, there must be a revote so his or her backers can group with another candidate's supporters.

THE HELP AMERICANS VOTING ACT AT FIVE

The Election Reform Information Project, November 2007

<http://www.electionline.org/Portals/1/Publications/HAVA.At.5.pdf>

In the five years since the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), election administration has, predictably, changed dramatically. From voter registration to voting systems to safeguards at the polls, the Act designed to address the ills of voting in 2000 has, in some respects, accomplished its objectives. But concerns about America's voting system persist, despite the passage of HAVA, and despite the largest federal investment in elections in history.

THE HISPANIC VOTE IN THE 2008 DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

The Pew Hispanic Center, February 21, 2008

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/742/hispanic-vote-exit-poll-texas-primary>

Latinos have already made a big mark in the primaries and caucuses held so far. Their share of the Democratic primary vote has risen in 12 of the 15 states for which exit polling makes it possible to compare 2008 and 2004 turnout shares. And in the Super Tuesday primaries on Feb. 5, Latinos voted for Clinton over Obama by an aggregate margin of nearly two-to-one. They were especially important to Clinton in California, where they comprised 30% of the turnout (up from 16% in 2004) and voted for her by a larger margin than did all voters statewide.

HISPANICS AND THE 2008 ELECTION: A SWING VOTE?

The Pew Hispanic Center, December 8, 2007

<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/83.pdf>

After spending the first part of this decade loosening their historic ties to the Democratic Party, Hispanic voters have reversed course in the past year, a new nationwide survey of Latinos by the Pew Hispanic Center has found. Some 57% of Hispanic registered voters now call themselves Democrats or say they lean to the Democratic Party, while just 23% align with the Republican Party -- meaning there is now a 34 percentage point gap in partisan affiliation among Latinos.

HOW AND WHEN EXPERIENCE IN A PRESIDENT COUNTS

Brookings Institution, April 3, 2008.

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/03_presidency_jones.aspx

Experience has become a dominant issue in the 2008 presidential campaign. Initially thought to be an open contest, the range and types of candidate experience have varied substantially: sitting and former senators, representatives and governors, and a former mayor and first lady. Stress on experience justifies a review of the historical record. How might the historical experience of experience apply to 2008?

INTERNET'S BROADER ROLE IN CAMPAIGN 2008

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, January 11, 2008

<http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/384.pdf>

The internet is living up to its potential as a major source for news about the presidential campaign. Nearly a quarter of Americans (24%) say they regularly learn something about the campaign from the internet, almost double the percentage from a comparable point in the 2004 campaign (13%). The quadrennial survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Internet & American Life Project on campaign news and political communication, conducted Dec. 19-30 among 1,430 adults, shows that the proportion of Americans who rely on traditional news sources for information about the campaign has remained static or declined slightly since the last presidential campaign. Compared with the 2000 campaign, far fewer Americans now say they regularly learn about the campaign from local TV news (down eight points), nightly network news (down 13 points) and daily newspapers (down nine points). Cable news networks are up modestly since 2000, but have shown no growth since the 2004 campaign. By contrast, the proportion of Americans who say they regularly learn about the campaign from the internet has more than doubled since 2000 -- from 9% to 24%.

THE LONG CAMPAIGN: U.S. ELECTIONS 2008

U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, October 2007

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/1007/ijde/ijde1007.htm>

This edition of eJournal USA presents an introduction to the upcoming 2008 U.S. elections. In these elections, U.S. voters will have the opportunity to vote for president and vice president, congressional representatives, state and local officials, and ballot initiatives. The journal describes aspects of this election which make it different from most recent elections and includes a pro-con debate of the Electoral College.

A MORE PERFECT UNION

Barack Obama's speech on race, Philadelphia, March 18, 2008

<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords>

This speech has already been hailed as one of the most powerful discourses ever given by a politician.

OVERSEAS VOTING: CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS

Electionline.org, October 2007

<http://www.electionline.org/Portals/1/Publications/EB21%20overseas%20voting%20final.pdf>

Casting ballots from abroad or while serving in the military presents challenges to the best-prepared citizen. Ballots must be requested, delivered by domestic and international mail services, filled out and returned, relying once again on a successful journey back to an election office. In this briefing, the process of overseas and military voting is examined, from the federal laws that govern the process to the innovations underway to streamline it to the difficulties anticipated in the 2008 primary season.

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING PROCESS: CURRENT ISSUES

The Congressional Research Service, October 24, 2007

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/94833.pdf>

Front-loading is only the most recent among a list of complaints about the nominating system, which has avoided wholesale change despite criticism every four years from voters, the candidates, and the press. After several decades of debate, observers are divided on the best approach to reform. The lack of consensus for reworking the primary system is due partly to its complex design, which frustrates pursuit of a simple, obvious solution, and partly to the political parties pursuing their own variable interests concerning their delegate selection rules. The states further complicate the process by independently scheduling primary election dates. Congress, political commentators, and academics have offered various reform proposals over the years, but many important dimensions of reform depend on whether the parties are willing to change the system for choosing delegates to their national conventions.

RACE, ETHNICITY AND CAMPAIGN '08

The Pew Research Center, January 17, 2008

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/694/race-ethnicity-and-campaign-08>

A major Pew Research survey of racial attitudes taken this past fall found that whites, blacks and Hispanics all have generally favorable opinions of one another and all tend to see inter-group relations in a more positive than negative light. There are some differences in these attitudes by race, ethnicity, age, social-economic status and geography -- but these tend to be small. The overall portrait of race relations is one of moderation, stability and modest progress.

RACE, IMMIGRATION AND AMERICA'S CHANGING ELECTORATE

The Brookings Institution, February 28, 2008

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/0227_demographics_frey/0227_demographics_paper_frey.pdf

One of the most profound changes in America's demography this century will be its shifting race and ethnic makeup. The rise of immigration from Latin America and Asia, the higher fertility of some minorities and the slow growth of America's aging white population will have profound impacts on the nation's demographic profile, with important implications for the electorate. The significance of these changes on identity politics, new racial coalitions and reactions to immigration has already been seen in the 2008 presidential sweepstakes. Yet, these shifts are only the tip of the iceberg of what can be expected in future election cycles as Hispanic, Asian, and Black Americans make up ever larger shares of the electorate.

THE RELIGION FACTOR IN THE 2008 ELECTION

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, December 4, 2007

<http://pewforum.org/events/?EventID=163>

Analyzing recent surveys, John C. Green suggested that the line dividing more observant and less observant voters - so pronounced in the 2004 election - may be blurring. Finally, Green pointed out that while a majority of Americans both like the idea of a president with strong religious faith and enjoy hearing candidates talk about their beliefs, a significant minority are turned off by what they perceive as too much faith talk; candidates must therefore walk a fine line in order to satisfy both constituencies.

THE ROLE OF DELEGATES IN THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING PROCESS

Council on Foreign Relations, February 12, 2008

http://www.cfr.org/publication/15414/delegate_system.html?breadcrumb=%2F

In recent decades, the presidential candidates of the two major political parties in the United States generally have emerged during state-by-state primary elections and caucuses that occur in the winter and spring before a general election. Officially, candidates only become their party's presidential nominee after a vote is taken by party delegates to the Republican or Democratic presidential nominating conventions later in the summer. These delegates are supposed to take their cue from the voters who cast ballots during their states' primaries and caucuses, though each party's rules make it possible for multiple rounds of balloting and horse trading if no candidate is able to gain a majority on the first ballot. But since 1976, no major party convention has opened with the identity of the nominee in question.

U. S. ELECTIONS AND THE WORLD

Foreign Policy Association, April 1, 2008

<http://publicdiplomacy.foreignpolicyblogs.com/about/>

"Public Diplomacy and the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election" is a link to a blog maintained by the Foreign Policy Association and the Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School, University of Southern California. It includes numerous links to other blogs and websites that focus on public diplomacy. Its purpose is to collect and analyze statements by U.S. Presidential candidates on world opinion and world opinion on the U.S. elections.

THE YOUNG VOTE: ENGAGING AMERICA'S YOUTH IN THE 2008 ELECTION AND BEYOND

The Brookings Institution, December 4, 2007

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/~media/Files/Projects/Opportunity08/PB_Youth_Vote_Carlin.pdf

Young Americans express great interest in the upcoming presidential elections and are concerned about the future of this country. Adults ages 18 to 30 are nearly one quarter of the eligible voter pool, yet this group is not well defined along party lines; nearly two out of five identify themselves as "independent." while the lack of party affiliation will prevent a significant number of young voters from voting in the primaries, the large number of independent young voters makes their vote both interesting and unpredictable when played out in general elections.

YOUTH VOTE 2008

The Century Foundation, September 7, 2007

<http://www.tcf.org/publications/electionreform/youthvote.pdf>

Election 2008 has the potential to be momentous for the youth vote. Young voters have turned out in consistently higher numbers for the past two election cycles, and speculation says that this trend will continue with a possible push even higher. In this new issue brief, Kristen Oshyn and Tova Andrea Wang look at studies and reports that describe a young generation that is increasingly engaged in the electoral process and one that is planning on sticking around.

<http://france.usembassy.gov/irc/politics/webalert/default.htm>